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ADEQ Director Owens Announces \$13,000 Water Quality Improvement Grant to Coronado National Forest

PHOENIX (June 20, 2008) – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality Director Steve Owens today announced that the department has awarded a \$13,000 Water Quality Improvement Grant to Coronado National Forest to protect the border area's watershed.

"We are pleased to support this important effort to protect the Santa Cruz River watershed," Director Owens said. "This grant will help reduce sedimentation problems in the River."

The project will reduce sediment loading in the Santa Cruz River by emphasizing better grazing management by building a 1-mile fence in a strategic gap in Sycamore and Providencia canyons. That area contains tributaries of the Santa Cruz River in the borderlands region of Southern Arizona.

The fence will keep livestock out of the waterways and prevent degradation of the riparian area caused by sedimentation. The disturbance of riparian areas by cattle drinking from the water source loosens the soil. That increases the sedimentation in the immediate area and down river and can carry nutrients, fertilizer and micro-organisms into the water.

The fencing also will keep Off-Highway Vehicles from the waterways along Sycamore Canyon, where their use is common.

The project is part of a larger private-public partnership in the Sycamore and Providencia canyon areas to enhance water quality and includes public education about protecting watersheds. The project covers nearly 55 square miles on the west side of the Patagonia Mountains.

The ADEQ grant is the first in five years for a water improvement project in Coronado National Forest. The grant is funded with federal dollars provided to ADEQ under the Clean Water Act.